



China's New Sea-Road-Rail Link to Indian Ocean

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Why in News

Recently, a new sea-road-rail link **providing Chengdu (China) with access to the Indian Ocean via Yangon (Myanmar)** was opened.

The trade corridor is **China's first to link western China with the Indian Ocean**.



Key Points

About New Trade Corridor:

- The new trade corridor passage **connects the logistics lines of Singapore, Myanmar and China**, and is currently the most **convenient land and sea channel linking the Indian Ocean with southwest China**.
- China also has plans to develop **another port in Kyaukphyu in the Rakhine state, Myanmar** including a proposed railway line from Yunnan (China) directly to the port, but the progress there has been stalled by **unrest in Myanmar**.
- China plans to develop this region in Myanmar as a '**border economic cooperation zone**' under the **Belt and Road Initiative**.
- It is expected to become the **lifeblood of international trade for China**, while providing a source of income for Myanmar.
- This trade corridor is **another direct Chinese outlet to the Indian ocean**.
The first one being at the **Gwadar port in Pakistan**.
- This trade route is also **China's alternative to the "Malacca Dilemma"**.
 - Malacca Dilemma is a **word coined in 2003**, by the then Chinese President Hu Jintao.
 - This refers to **China's fear of a maritime blockade at the Straits of Malacca**. Since most of China's oil imports pass through the Straits of Malacca, a maritime blockade here could paralyze China's economy.

Geographic Location of Malacca Strait



About Gwadar Port:

- Gwadar is being developed as part of the CPEC to the far **western Xinjiang region**.
- Gwadar has long been touted as the site for a Chinese base suitable for **People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN)** operations.
- China pursues a "strategic strongpoint" concept whereby **strategically sited foreign ports containing terminals and commercial zones** operated by Chinese firms can be used by its military.
- Such "strongpoints" offer the potential for China to form a network of supply, logistics and intelligence hubs along the **perimeter of the Indian Ocean**.
This is referred to as the **String of Pearls theory**.
- Gwadar is important to China for **three reasons**:
 - One is establishing **direct transport links to the Indian Ocean** via the CPEC.
 - The second factor is that Gwadar helps anchor or **stabilise western China, a region where China feels vulnerable to Islamic agitation**.
 - Further, Gwadar is just 400 km from the important **Hormuz Strait** (linking Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian sea), through which 40% of Chinese imported oil flows.



Implications for India:

- China's economic stakes in the Bay of Bengal and this new trade corridor signifies a larger maritime presence and naval engagement in the region which in turn **reinforces the string of pearls policy by China.**
- Apart from **this trade corridor** and **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, China is also planning the **China-Nepal Economic Corridor (CNEC)** which will link Tibet to Nepal.
 - The endpoints of the project will touch the boundaries of the Gangetic plain.
 - Thus three corridors signify the economic as well as strategic rise of China in the Indian subcontinent.

Source: TH